

**Congressman Christopher Shays**  
**Floor Speech on H.Con.Res. 63**  
**February 14, 2007**

Madam Speaker, it is good we are having this debate. As a 20-year veteran of this place, I am, frankly, impressed with the heartfelt and articulate statements from both sides of the aisle. On matters of war and peace, it is imperative we do what is right for our country, as we see it, and then live personally with the consequences.

Critics of the war in Iraq wanted new leadership at the Department of Defense, new military leadership on the ground, and a new plan to stabilize Iraq and bring our troops home.

We have a new Defense Secretary, Robert Gates, new Commanding General of Multinational Forces, David Petraeus, who everyone acknowledged is as perfect a person for this job as we could find, and a new strategy to clean up, hold and rebuild the neighborhoods with a short-term buildup of our forces.

The Democratic majority in the House has introduced a resolution condemning this strategy, expressing disapproval, without offering any alternatives. Ironically, they offer a stay the course resolution.

The majority is clear on what it is against, but does not say what it is for, leaving us with what exists right now, the status quo.

The resolution sends the wrong message to the President, to our troops, and to our enemies. It will not get my vote.

We need a resolution to help resolve this conflict, not a symbolic resolution that gives no guidance on how we can help stabilize Iraq and bring our troops home.

Working with Congressman *Frank Wolf* and others, we helped create the Iraq Study Group, bipartisan experts led by Jim Baker and Lee Hamilton who offered fresh eyes on Iraq and offered specific recommendations.

The Iraq Study Group made three recommendations, transfer responsibility for police patrolling the streets from American troops to Iraqi security forces; two, encourage Sunnis and Shias to resolve their differences or face the consequences, American troops leaving; and, three, conduct a robust diplomatic effort with all of Iraq's neighbors to engage them in the country's future.

The White House has implemented the first and second of those recommendations but, regretfully, not the third.

The Study Group provided a road map resoundingly endorsed by members from both political parties. It is a missed opportunity that the resolution we are debating this week does not incorporate these three recommendations.

I know there are many Americans who are concerned about a short-term increase in troops to secure and regain control of Baghdad. I understand their concern. Two years ago I believed this strategy had a better than even chance to work. Today it is less likely to succeed, but it is still the best opportunity we have.

But this strategy will only work if Iraqi troops do their part; Sunni and Shia politicians resolve their differences, meeting benchmarks against firm timelines like they did in 2005; and the U.S. and Iraq engage in a diplomatic surge with all of Iraq's neighbors, including Syria and Iran.

We also need to be prepared with plan B if this plan fails. It seems to me plan B involves taking our troops out of harm's way, removing them from the urban areas, and placing them along the borders so Iraq's neighbors, Syria, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Jordan, and Turkey, are not tempted to enter Iraq.

And if plan B fails, we will have no choice but to leave, having been defeated, having lost to the Islamist terrorists who have made it very clear this is just the beginning.

In essence, our troops deserve to know we have a plan to win. If we do not have a plan to win, we need a plan to leave. The resolution before the House neither helps us succeed nor gives us guidance on when and how to leave. It is counterproductive.

It is so counterproductive, for 535 Members of the House of Representatives and Senate to micromanage the war. It is the responsibility of the administration to conduct the war effort. It is Congress's responsibility to conduct tough oversight, hold the administration accountable for the implementation of the war.

Having chaired 14 hearings on the operations in Iraq and been to Iraq 15 times to conduct on-the-ground oversight, I will continue to ask the administration the tough questions and to provide, to the best of my ability, my observations and recommendations.

Regretfully, too few Members of Congress have fully considered the consequence of leaving Iraq prematurely. The Iraq Study Group warned, ``If the situation in Iraq continues to deteriorate, the consequence could be severe for Iraq, the United States, the region, and the world." This is what members of the Iraq Study Group said on a bipartisan basis, Republicans and Democrats united.

The ultimate goal for me is to bring our troops home without leaving Iraq in chaos. This is still achievable if Republicans and Democrats, the White House and Congress, agree on a bipartisan solution and then carry it out with steely resolve. Officially endorsing the recommendations of that Iraq Study Group and acting on them is the best way to make this happen.

The only way we should leave Iraq is the same way we went in: together.